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ABSTRACT

Responding to increased interest in the development and education of children, many states have invested in initiatives to facilitate school success of prekindergarten-age children. Although national progress is encouraging, individual state initiatives are uneven, ranging from bold innovations with major funding to inaction and reliance on narrow, traditional program models. This report focuses mainly on 23 of the states that had prekindergarten initiatives where the state developed a separate state model. The following sections are included: (1) Overview of the Scope and Approaches of State Prekindergarten Initiatives; (2) Overview of Policies that Promote Quality in State Prekindergarten Initiatives, focusing on ensuring quality early childhood education, supporting comprehensive services, and encouraging parental involvement and education; (3) Overview of Policies that Promote Access to State Prekindergarten Initiatives; and (4) Building a Comprehensive System for Early Childhood Care and Education. Some key findings of the report include the following: (1) most states with prekindergarten initiatives chose to launch their own programs; (2) most separate state initiatives sought to target funds to children at risk of school failure; and (3) nearly half of the separate state initiatives did not clearly address the comprehensive service needs of children in their programs. Three appendices to the report include a description of Georgia's voluntary prekindergarten program, additional information on prekindergarten policies listed by state, and state Medicaid eligibility guidelines. The report also lists contacts for separate state prekindergarten initiatives and for state supplements for federal prekindergarten programs. (BGC)